

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RIDGEFIELD,  
CONNECTICUT RECREATION  
PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN  
AGES SIX THROUGH  
EIGHTEEN

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The thesis analyzes the presently existing recreational program and facilities of Ridgefield, Connecticut, and evaluates their adequacy in terms of the recreational needs and interests of Ridgefield's children between the ages of six and eighteen.

Ridgefield, as many small New England towns within the periphery of the New York metropolitan area, has during the last few decades experienced a sharp upsurge in its population as a result of a large-scale influx of commuters. This rapid population growth, concentrated in young families with school-age children, has created particularly serious problems in the area of child recreation. It is recognized that the increased amounts of leisure time, a typical outgrowth of the ever-rising standard of living, may become either a boon or a burden to the individual child and to the community as a whole. Leisure time presents a direct challenge to the community to provide an adequate recreational program and recreation facilities in order to ensure a wholesome environment for the community's young residents.

In determining the adequacy of Ridgefield's present recreational program and facilities, a comparison was made between the community's recreation provisions and the standards established by the National Recreation Association. Although it is recognized that these standards are not rigidly applicable to all towns of the size of Ridgefield,

it is felt that the general characteristics of Ridgefield do not materially differ from those of the large majority of small towns. Therefore, a comparison of this type is fully justifiable, and provides a practical basis for a proper evaluation and recommendations.

The findings of the study indicate that neither the recreational program nor the presently existing facilities meet the accepted standards set forth by the National Recreation Association. The divergence between facilities and standards is, in fact, so wide that improvements are both urgently and quickly needed. Awareness of recreational deficiencies appears to be strong, however, as witnessed by the strenuous efforts on the part of local youth-serving agencies to organize recreational activities within their limited means. Unfortunately, however, such awareness is not shared by the town's official authorities, as reflected in the absence of such basic requirements as a central agency and budget for recreational programs and outlays.

The thesis concludes with a number of specific recommendations, designed to provide Ridgefield with recreational facilities which will meet the minimum acceptable standards as set forth by the National Recreational Association, the leading authority in the field of recreation. These recommendations, include the establishment of an official managing authority, the appointment of a full-time director of recreation, the establishment of a separate budget and an advisory council, and finally, the construction of facilities

and development of programs which will answer the basic recreational needs of Ridgefield's youth.